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Pace University
Senior Thesis in History
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The Cooperation of the American Jewish
Committee and Christian Establishment and
Its Impact During the Struggle for Soviet
Jewry in 1971-1972

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I. Introduction

The resurgence of Jewish consciousness in the Soviet Union following the Six-Day War of 1967 and especially the growing demand to immigrate to Israel awakened a strong response from the Jewish community establishment in America.¹ Because Jews in the Soviet Union were discriminated against, their American counterparts became more determined in the struggle to get Soviet Jews the rights that other minority nationalities enjoyed and eventually to convince the Soviet government to allow Jews to emigrate from the USSR.

The struggle for Soviet Jewry started primarily as a student movement in 1964 but after the Six-Day Israeli War in 1967 the more resourceful American Jewish establishment took note of this issue. The consideration of the seriousness of the problem is evident in the amount of activity that emerged during 1971-72 in the United States concerning Soviet Jews. Tactics were utilized to put pressure on the Soviet government to relax their policies affecting the Jews and to make more liberal emigration policies were utilized. Such tactics included letter-writing campaigns, rallies and media coverage of Soviet injustices. There were also actions that persuaded the American officials to effectively influence the Soviets through restricting diplomatic relations between the two countries. Continuous efforts of different Jewish organizations in stirring up publicity and awareness of the issues pertinent to the struggle for Soviet Jewry resulted in the Soviet Union ease up of the immigration policies due to the Jackson-Vanik Amendment of 1974. Instrumental in this struggle was the involvement of non-Jewish religious groups.

The current research on the movement focuses primarily on tracing the history of the movement with respect to its effects on the Soviet Union with little emphasis on the organizational interaction that took place to bring about those changes. Since there were numerous participants these works ended up being survey-type materials trying to encompass some information about everyone's efforts without offering comprehensive coverage of individual agencies' efforts. The discussion can be enhanced by analyzing the interaction between Jewish establishment and non-Jewish religious leadership in the US that were responsible together in launching the vast publicity campaigns and ensuring strong and rapid support of the United States government. The case-in-point will be the examination of the working relationship between the American Jewish Committee and representatives of the Christian leadership in the creation and operation of the National Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry in 1971-1972. The purpose is to investigate how differing religious communities cooperated in order to resolve this human rights issue. The important points to seek would be: initiatives that took place to foster the relationship between two establishments, who were the people involved, and what their motivations were. Another area to research is the strategies used to convince the US government officials to advocate on behalf of the Soviet Jews in the Congress and how the US authorities officially reacted to the struggle for Soviet Jewry.

There is a gap in the study of the Soviet Jewry movement as there currently is no published literature dealing specifically with Jewish-Christian relations during the struggle for Soviet Jewry in the early 1970s. The source used for background information is The American Movement to Aid Soviet Jews by William Orbach. This book presents very specific details on the struggle of American Jewish community on

behalf of Soviet Jews roughly between 1960 and 1980. However, the author's points and opinions can almost escape the reader behind a myriad of listings of organizational meetings, personality conflicts, and internal quarrels.² The bulk of the information and ideas presented in this work will come directly from the primary sources. These sources can mainly be divided into several groups: organizational reports, memoranda, speeches and statements from government officials, and media coverage such as newspapers and press releases. Organizational reports clearly outline the goals, specific actions recommended to achieve those goals, and evaluation of previously done work. Memoranda show the nature of communication between various involved parties and participants. AJC memoranda demonstrate how the organization's staff working on the Soviet Jewry issue extended themselves to accomplish important tasks, while memoranda of the National Interreligious Consultation on Soviet Jewry were mostly informational directives to member agencies. Speeches and statements from various prominent members of the political scene demonstrate the commitment that they and their respective offices had to the immigration problems of the Soviet Jews. There was widespread coverage of the plight of Soviet Jewry in the media. A sampling of newspaper clippings contains public appeals to support the struggle for Soviet Jewry and inform the public on activities and legislation regarding this cause. Looking across these sources there is a sense of continuity between ideologies leading the struggle and strategies implemented to pressure the USSR to "open the doors." Overall, they convey genuine concern over this serious issue.

II. American Jewish Committee Policy Framework

The American Jewish Committee was able to attract Christian religious leadership by setting up a policy framework of finding issues that would bring conflicting groups together while at the same time encouraged such groups to maintain and strengthen their own cultural and religious identities. In May of 1971 the American Jewish Committee convened for its annual meeting, in which much thought and analysis was presented regarding the Jewish place in American society and its relation to the plight of Soviet Jews. This was a time of racial and ethnic conflict when different groups sought to assert a new identity and power based on group interests instead of individual pursuits. In this new environment with emphasis on the group identity Jews had definable goals like the creative survival of Jews as a group, physical security of Jews, existence of the State of Israel.³ Recognizing that Jews are better off in united societies, the AJC avoided group conflicts focusing on single-dimension issues such as race and religion and tried to find common purposes for coalescing opposing groups.⁴ The idea of gathering Christian support for the Soviet Jewish cause can be clearly recognized as the solution the American Jewish Committee found to mobilizing general American support for the issue.

In the assessment of the Soviet Jewry situation and needed initiatives AJC staff members were able to extract key points that later proved themselves true and implementation of which directly influenced the outcome of the struggle. The Soviets while letting out many Jews from the country, held on to publicly denouncing Zionism and anyone found related.⁵ This paradox was perhaps evidence that the Soviet Union wanted to keep control of the situation but had to succumb to worldwide pressures to be less strict in its emigration policy towards Jews who wanted to emigrate. One of the

factors believed to move the Soviets to allow for this larger immigration was cited as the “U.S.S.R.’s sensitivity to being called ‘insensitive’ to human rights.”⁶ Activities on behalf of Soviet Jewry had to come from local communities throughout United States, but the feeling was that only peaceful actions would benefit the cause of Soviet Jewry. The work would be divided between national agencies that were to formulate programs and make approaches to Washington, while the grass-roots support in the community had to be made known to the nation’s leaders. The “Cold war” issues were to be kept out of the debate on Soviet Jewry.⁷ A suggestion was made that feelings of all groups concerned with Soviet Jewry be made known to the government in the words and style of each group. The following tactics were considered as viable: more education in the local communities on Soviet repression of Jews, a better way to present the issues in the mass media, marches, rallies, resolutions by state legislatures pointing out Soviet violations of human rights. Another good point made in analyzing the situation was that the American Jewish “establishment” organizations lacked interest in Soviet Jewry, which reflected their lack of interest in Judaism.⁸ One way to counteract this condition to add voices and power to the struggle was to enlist support of Christian groups for the concept of equal rights for the Soviet Jews. What encouraged Christian religious leaders to stand at the forefront of this human rights struggle was the timidity of the Soviet Union in resolving the Jewish question out of fear that special treatment of Jews would result in similar demands for other national minorities, including Christians.⁹

III. The Master Plan of the Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry

The discrimination and encroaching on civil rights of Jews in the Soviet Union resonated with Christian groups to the point that groups such as the National Catholic

Conference on Interracial Justice (NCCIJ), the Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) in cooperation with the American Jewish Committee (AJC) joined together to organize a special conference on October 13th, 1971. The conference would attempt to open a dialogue within the pool of American communal leaders on how to best approach the effective resolution of the Soviet Jewry crisis from the interreligious perspective.¹⁰ Surprisingly, Sister Margaret Traxler, Executive Director of the NCCIJ, was the one to push for the conference.¹¹ This forum was a pre-requisite to the further development of support in the United States for Soviet Jews. The attendees, two-thirds of which were Christians and one-third Jewish, unanimously agreed to form an Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry (NITSJ) with Sister Traxler and Dr. Andre LaCocque of the Chicago Theological Seminary as Co-Chairmen and Judah Graubart of the American Jewish Committee as the Secretary. The purpose of the NITSJ was to supply a national and prestigious organization, which concerned Christians and Jews could use when acting on behalf of the Soviet Jewish community.¹² Since there were already many Jewish organizations on the scene, the Task Force had to encompass largely Christian elements.

The establishment of the Interreligious Task Force facilitated a discussion of needed programming and its implications for grass-roots movements as well as for national levels. Some key strategies were utilizing the media better to educate the Christian public on the urgency of the plight of Soviet Jews, publication of newsletters, reports and statements to be information tools for the Christian community, and influencing and informing important shapers of public opinion on the necessity for progressive and positive action to improve the situation of Soviet Jewry.¹³ These efforts were to be concentrated mainly on developing and using local communal structures such

as sectarian colleges, church organizations, ministerial associations, etc. Present at the conference was Dr. Mikhail Zand, a Soviet Jewish émigré, formerly of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. and after emigration, the faculty of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Dr. Zand stressed the need for liberal Christian support of the Soviet Jewry struggle. He expressed that Jews in the Soviet Union found it increasingly difficult to practice their religion there or enjoy their culture without the fear of being arrested.¹⁴ It was in light of such conditions that the support of American Christians could be of a great significance since, according to Zand, “their voices on behalf of Soviet Jews clearly influence the policies of the Soviet government on this question.”¹⁵

It was at this meeting that plans for a major national interreligious consultation on the question of Soviet Jewry were laid out. The need to involve high level Christian leadership in the upcoming consultation in order to ensure the greatest credibility was one of the general points of the discourse.¹⁶ Thus, the intention of the consultation would be to bring together the country’s leading Catholic, Protestant and Jewish community leaders as well as to study and act upon the predicament of Soviet Jews. The National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice agreed to provide free office space and clerical staff to run the activities of the Task Force. David Geller, the European Affairs Specialist of the American Jewish Committee, was to be an adviser to the Task Force assisting with focusing of the various consultation sessions and the selection of the appropriate resource people.¹⁷ The Chicago Theological Seminary affiliated with the University of Chicago offered to host the National Interreligious Consultation on Soviet Jewry at their facilities.¹⁸ Such mutual cooperation and supply of relevant resources between these

differing organizations show that working with a common goal in mind can unite groups in unexpected yet emanating ways.

Some other objectives were set by the Task Force at the inception and, as will later become evident, were implemented very successfully to help the cause. Such was the consideration by the Task Force to dispatch a high level interreligious mission to the Soviet Union to investigate conditions there and show support for the Soviet Jews.¹⁹ Also, during the times of crisis and emergence, the NITSJ was to act as a mobilizing and coordinating body within the Christian community.

IV. Response of US Officials to the Soviet Jewry Crisis in 1971

There was considerable discussion and deliberation in government circles on the Soviet Jewry situation. Especially noble are the efforts of then Congressman Edward Koch of New York, who visited the Soviet Union in the spring of 1971. While there he met with Jewish families, who sent a petition to the United Nations asking to aid in their immigration to Israel, an act which was punishable by Soviet law.²⁰ Koch was fast to reassure them that people of all faiths and beliefs in the United States were concerned and wanted to help. Upon return he not only reported his findings to the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe, but introduced the Soviet Jews Relief Act of 1971, a bill that would authorize 30,000 refugee visas for Soviet Jews who wished to come to the US when and if they were permitted to do so by the Soviet authorities.²¹ Such attempt to help modeled after other special legislations that previously permitted refugees to settle in the US. Though not eventually passed into law, Koch's initiative facilitated further official consideration and activity.

Later in the year Richard T. Davies, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs in the Department of State presented his findings to the same House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe, in which he outlined the official view on the subject and proposed suggestions to relieve the plight of Soviet Jews. According to Davies, President Nixon joined leaders of the American Jewish community in urging cultural and religious freedom as well as “freedom of emigration as explicitly provided in Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” which states that “Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.”²² Various other official statements conveyed a deep concern for the difficulties that the Soviet government created for Jewish citizens who legally applied for emigration and were looking to preserve their intellectual heritage. There were also a number of bills introduced for Congressional action, but none were enacted in that year.

There was not much the United States government was doing to pressure the Soviets officially into allowing emigration, but made use of private diplomatic channels to relay the importance of free emigration and reunification of families.²³ Regular official representation of lists of Soviet residents, including Jews, was provided to Soviet authorities at the highest levels. For example, there was an instance of handing a list of 150 Soviet Jews as well as other relatives of American citizens to Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko in his meeting with Secretary of State Rogers in New York in September of 1971.²⁴ The Soviet government was not budging on the free emigration issue. Therefore, only reunification of families could be the official focus of the US. But immigration averaging 250 people per year was just too small of a number compared to the three

million Jews subjected to prejudice in the Soviet Union. Something else — something more — had to be done.

V. The National Interreligious Consultation on Soviet Jewry

Meticulous strategizing and thought were invested into the planning of the National Interreligious Consultation on Soviet Jewry from the Jewish side as well as from the Christian participants. As one AJC memorandum states, the consensus was to keep the visibility of the American Jewish Committee to “an absolute minimum,” while that of the involved Christians was to be emphasized as much as possible.²⁵ Consequently, only a few Jewish names, preferably ones most likely to be recognized by the Christian community, were to be chosen as co-sponsors of the Task Force and eventually be listed on the organization’s stationery.²⁶ In order to enlist Christian sponsorship, a mailgram signed with Honorary Chairman Ambassador Sargent Shriver’s name was to be sent out to 130 people of national prominence asking them to serve as co-sponsors. The list of people was broad-based in terms of professional activity, including a number of national political figures, due to the “crucial nature of this issue.”²⁷ The AJC was careful to exclude any individuals who were in the running for nomination to political office. Only after sufficient response the names of these figures were to be put on the stationery to be sent out to other Christians inviting them for the March Consultation.²⁸ The American Jewish Committee suggested it would be more appropriate and effective to have the keynote address to be delivered by someone associated with the National Administration.²⁹ Such a proposal was consistent with the need to make clear to the world, and especially the Soviet government, that the cause of Soviet Jewry did not concern the American Jewish community alone. Those invited to the Consultation were

leading church figures most of whom had a favorable pre-disposition to the plight of Soviet Jewry. Some had manifested it in official statements or verbal declarations.³⁰

The National Interreligious Consultation on Soviet Jewry held on March 19-20, 1972 was a turning point in the movement that brought together 165 key institutional and academic personalities who met for a day-and-a-half at the University of Chicago.³¹ Shriver's requests for sponsorship turned out a roster of over 40 prominent Americans from the government, the arts, education, sports and entertainment.³² Keynote speakers made powerful impacts on their audiences. The address by Rita Hauser, former U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Human Rights Commission and vice-chairman of the President's Nixon re-election campaign, expressed the commitment of the Administration to continue to press the Soviet government to allow free emigration of all Jews who sought to leave the Soviet Union.³³ The Soviet Jewry issue had also resonated with the black community as demonstrated by the speech Mayor Charles Evers of Fayette, Miss., in which he expressed solidarity with Soviet Jews as gratitude for Jewish participation in the Mississippi civil rights movement.³⁴ Another highlight of the event was a powerful speech by Congressman Robert Drinan, the first Jesuit priest serving in Congress, who represented a true passionate commitment of the Christian community. He appealed to the Christians of America to stand up against the unfair treatment of Soviet Jews and asked them to urge President Nixon to discuss this issue when he was to visit the Soviet Union the following May.³⁵ He also astonished the assembled with his announced intentions to visit Israel in May as a part of the Task Force mission and talk with Soviet Jews who were able to emigrate to that country. His words provide a clue to

understanding why a Christian should be outraged by what was happening to Jews in the Soviet Union:

“...it is the very contribution of the Jews to humanity which is under attack. It is precisely the Jewish testimony in the world that man’s identity and freedom are not granted primarily by any state or constitution but are found in the nature of man himself. That is why each human being is threatened in his fundamental right to freedom of conscience when the Jews are persecuted.”³⁶

The success of the Consultation can be derived from its impact on the mass of religious leaders who were now exposed to the problem, and coverage in the press, radio and television communicating the message about Soviet Jews and other oppressed people to the public and political circles. During brainstorming sessions participants pondered as to how Christians and Jews could mobilize their constituencies more effectively to support the cause. The following major recommendations when launched into action brought the cause of Soviet Jewry closer to the goal of emigration:

- Interreligious delegation should meet with President Nixon as soon as possible to ask for his negotiation with Soviet leadership on behalf of the oppressed Soviet Jews when he would visit Moscow in May. Within a week after the event a letter to the President was drafted asking him for a meeting to share the Consultation’s concerns over harassment of Soviet Jews and discuss how his visit to Moscow could contribute to the relaxation of international tensions.³⁷
- A permanent National Interreligious Secretariat on Soviet Jewry was to be established for the purpose of coordinating national and international programs.
- The unanimously adopted “Statement of Conscience,” a document which outlined the protests of Jews and Christians united in one voice against Soviet practices of hindering the practice of Judaism and obstacles to immigration, was made

available to all Christian and Jewish leadership throughout the country and was used as a platform to attract support for the Solidarity Day observances scheduled for April 30th.³⁸

Extraordinary coverage provided by such prominent news services as *The New York Times*, Associated Press, the United Press, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Religious News Service, National Catholic News Service, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Time Magazine*, etc., shows that the news of this event was of a prime importance on the American scene.³⁹ The news on the National Consultation was also delivered in Russian to the Soviet Union by the Voice of America, Radio Liberty, and Kol Yisroel, in order that the oppressed be aware of the American support and, thus, inspired by it. The report on the Consultation was sent to major government officials such as the Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, R.T. Davies, US Representative to the United Nations, George Bush, and to Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, all of whom were very grateful to receive it.⁴⁰

Recommendations for follow ups used a targeted approach and were proposed in the categories of special projects, institutions and structures, and information and communications. The special projects noted for immediate implementation included a path of dissemination of the “Statement of Conscience”, plans for group and personal visits to the Soviet Union, and local interreligious meetings based on national conference – activities all directed to increase awareness and particularly Christian support.⁴¹ Along with establishment of a permanent Interreligious Secretariat on Soviet Jewry, the institutional approach focused on recommendations for improving communication and outreach to various national Catholic, men’s and women’s groups, and councils of

churches especially in order to secure wide participation in the Solidarity Day Observances to be held on April 30th, 1972.⁴² Information and communication recommendations focused on synthesizing information on Soviet Jewry into articles in Christian media, publications, introduction of programming on religious TV and radio, press releases, petitions distribution in Christian communities, etc.⁴³

IV. Christian Organizations Show Solidarity

The amount of publicity created around the issue of the plight of Soviet Jews and response efforts led to more formal statements by various groups and actions by the government officials. If in 1971 we do find such organizations as the World Methodist Council and the Biennial General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) voluntarily publicly identifying themselves with the plight of the Jewish victims of Soviet oppression, then in 1972 after the National Interreligious Consultation on Soviet Jewry in March many more Christian religious affiliations around the US started to issue announcements of their support for this human rights struggle and action directives to congregants regarding the National Solidarity Day. For example, the National Association of Evangelicals adopted a resolution on 'Religious Freedom Around the World' calling on President Nixon to convey American moral and humanitarian concern to the Soviet Union, which is evidence of the major concern regarding this issue for this Christian group.⁴⁴ The Connecticut Council of Churches asked its member churches to plan programs on the topic and sign petitions.⁴⁵ Reverend Joseph Bernardin, General Secretary of the United States Catholic Conference, expressed camaraderie with the movement due to protest petition of 17,000 Lithuanian Catholics whose rights were also suppressed in the Soviet Union.⁴⁶ Bishop Sherman of Long Island informed the clergy of

the Diocese of Long Island of the Soviets' tenacity in continuously denying the Jews their fundamental rights, and that the upcoming Solidarity Day should be a reason for millions of Americans to band together as the memory of the 6,000,000 Jews perished in Holocaust was still vivid.⁴⁷ Many more ecclesiastical endorsements for the National Solidarity Day communicated around the country made the National Solidarity Day of April 30, 1972 a huge success. The largest coordinated event ever scheduled on behalf of Soviet Jewry served as a public outcry to the world and showed unification of many denominations for this cause.⁴⁸ It was a response to the intensification of the situation in the Soviet Union, where people were incarcerated for actively pursuing a Jewish lifestyle.⁴⁹ Due to such excitement and rallying on the part of the American public, though not on the official agenda, President Nixon did bring up the issue of Soviet Jewry during his visit to Moscow.

VI. Reaction to Soviet "Ransom" Exit Fees

The imposition of the Soviet "ransom" fees for exit permits stirred up a new wave of response activity from the Jewish-Christian collaboration. In the summer of 1972 the Soviet Union formally adopted a grossly exaggerated education tax in order to discourage the growing Jewish emigration.⁵⁰ Immediately the National Interreligious Consultation on Soviet Jewry urged its participants to send letters to local newspapers, telegrams and letters to the White House as well Soviet authorities in Washington, and to other prominent political figures.⁵¹ Congressman Drinan expressed a wish to visit Moscow to get a better sense of how the "ransom" fees were affecting immigration and to inspire the Soviet Jews and Americans as well.⁵² "The Task" newsletter, put together by the National Interreligious Task Force, which served as an analytical report of the social, economic,

political, and cultural plight of the Jews in Soviet Union, meant to present the most up-to-date information in a comprehensive manner.⁵³

VII. Jackson-Vanik Amendment and Its Implications

The Jackson-Vanik Amendment introduced into the Senate and House of Representatives was a remarkable showing on the part of the legislators determined to deny the USSR the most-favored-nation status in the trade and credit agreement as long as the USSR denied its citizens the right to emigrate or impose more than a nominal tax for emigration. In September of 1972 Washington Senator Jackson linked the prohibitive Soviet tax with the trade bill Nixon had placed before the Congress.⁵⁴ He declared that “the time has come to place highest human values ahead of the trade dollar.”⁵⁵ In the beginning of October Jackson along with 76 of his Senate colleagues co-sponsored an amendment to the trade bill, which prohibited most-favored-nation status for any “non-market economy country” that limits the right of emigration – a veiled allusion to the plight of Soviet Jewry.⁵⁶ Charles Vanik in the House of Representatives drew up similar document for passage. While it took time until December 13th of 1974 to pass this Amendment, Jackson together with Henry Kissinger worked out a list of specific criteria the Congress expected the Soviet Union to follow.⁵⁷ Thus, the Amendment resulted in reassurances by the Soviet government that it would be against Soviet law to use punitive actions, intimidation and reprisals of those seeking emigration as well as relaxing other rules, including a 60,000 per year visa limit.⁵⁸ At that point the doors of the Soviet Union were open for emigration and the movement for the struggle for Soviet Jewry had achieved its ultimate goal.

VIII. Conclusion

It is undeniable that the involvement of Christian religious groups and prominent individuals had played a crucial role in the struggle for Soviet Jewry in early 1970s. In this struggle the Jewish community acted not as an outsider, but as member of the world whose fundamental rights were under attack. In order to ensure Christian participation, the American Jewish Committee, along with other Jewish organizations, tried to shy away from making the struggle for Soviet Jewry solely a Jewish dilemma by focusing on portraying it as a universal human rights crisis. The American Jewish Committee recognized the long-standing historical fact that the Jews needed the non-Jews to be on their side for survival and promotion of democratic processes. An illuminating circumstance of the Christian involvement in the struggle for Soviet Jewry was that religious institutions had undertaken their own initiatives to reach out to their constituents for support of protests against Soviet Jewry discrimination. The Christian solidarity was coming out of the spirit that Jews and Christians were spiritual brothers and sisters who came from one background.

The year 1971 saw much situation assessment, strategizing and figuring out how to approach the struggle from a peaceful and lawful perspective while making it most influential and effective. The organization of the National Interreligious Consultation for Soviet Jewry event on March 19-20, 1972, which required communication and planning, was a catalyst in the movement because it brought together key people of prominence identified as sympathizers of the struggle. The speeches given by the U.S. Ambassador to U.N. Human Right Commission Rita Hauser, Father Robert Drinan and Mayor Evers indicated that not only the official United States, but the Catholic and African-American

communities could be persuaded to voice opinions to the world about the situation. The amount of activity that sprang up after the Consultation is a testament to the amazing power of cooperation exerted by organizational leaders in getting the word out to the media and the public. Many Christian councils of churches and local church groups issued their official responses of protests to Soviet suppression of the exercise of religion. All of them also conveyed their appeal to President Nixon to champion on behalf of the cause for Soviet Jewry during his visit to Soviet Union and meeting with Premier Leonid Brezhnev. These statements helped to make the National Solidarity Day for Soviet Jewry a success. Many petitions from various groups including non-Jewish ones were forwarded to Nixon prior to his departure. As later became known, Nixon did talk to Soviet authorities about these issues.

The imposition of “ransom” exit fees by the Soviet Union on those receiving exit visas really struck a cord with Jewish and Christian groups. The plight of Soviet Jewry was given an elevated priority and the wave of outreach activity intensified. Christians were encouraged to write letters to local newspapers and different officials, and visit the USSR to support the Jews.

Out of this genuine concern for human rights to exercise religion and freedom to move about the Jackson-Vanik Amendment came out, a key piece of legislation linking Soviet trade privileges with the country’s immigration policies. Both Jackson and Vanik were concerned Christians who in one way or the other were influenced by the general support of the Soviet Jewry issue by the American public of both religions. The negotiations about Soviet immigration were done at the highest diplomatic level. It was all a result of Americans acting as concerned individuals and voicing their opinions. It is

a big question whether the rather apathetic Jewish establishment of the time would have been able to generate such a tremendous amount of American attention and publicity without the help of rallying Christian organizations dedicated to resolving the Soviet Jewry struggle.

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